

Education Committee

SUPPORT: Executive Budget Charter Per Pupil Increase & SB 948, SB 949, and SB 886.

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Dear Lawmakers,

My name is Carrie Miner and I am from the Integrated Day Charter School in Norwich. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about an issue that has an impact on many Connecticut students. I am testifying in support SB 948, SB 949, and SB 886 and of significantly increasing the funding to charter schools.

I am speaking to you today as both a parent and a teacher. I have two children who have attended Integrated Day Charter School since PreK - Claudia, who is now in fifth grade, and Elias, who is in third grade. As a teacher, I have taught in traditional public schools in Hartford and Stamford, a charter school in New London, and am currently the Special Education Coordinator at IDCS. I am also a member of the Integrated Day Education Alliance (which is similar to a PTO) and the treasurer for the IDCS Foundation.

IDCS is a diverse community where students can share ideas and be who they want to be. There is a strong focus on public speaking and engaging in community service. Parent involvement is encouraged and the school really has a sense of being a family. My two children have thrived at IDCS.

Today I want to specifically talk to you about my other children - my students. IDCS currently has 30 students with individualized education plans and 21 students with Section 504 plans coming from six different districts. As a charter school, we do receive some money from the sending districts for our students receiving special education services, but that money is mostly from direct instruction hours. It does not cover the cost of many of the other educational tools essential to provide a successful individualized program. By increasing the funding per student in charter schools, our special education population will be able to afford the specialized programs and training for teachers and paraprofessionals working with each student. We currently have three teachers trained in the Orton-Gillingham reading program, which has been a tremendous success for students with dyslexia and other reading struggles. It is a very expensive program to be trained in and more of our teachers would love to be able to learn it. With increased funding, we will also have the ability to purchase academic achievement tests which are needed to identify the specific needs of each student when they are first identified as eligible for specialized instruction, as well as reassess them every three years for their triennial reviews. More money per student would also allow us to purchase much needed items which have proven beneficial for many of our students, not only students receiving special education services, but all students in the school - some of these include flexible seating, sensory and fidget objects, weighted objects, resistance bands, etc.

It is my dream to be able to build a sensory room at IDCS. This room would allow all students a therapeutic space with equipment personalized for each student's sensory needs. A dedicated sensory room will help students calm and comfort themselves, improve focus, and reduce anxiety to prepare them for learning and interacting with others. With additional funding to charter schools, this dream can be a reality for my students.

I am a strong advocate for public education and have dedicated my career to teaching in public schools. Public charter schools should be provided with funds comparable to those of town and city public schools. All students should be equally funded based on their needs.

I thank you for your leadership and I ask you to please support all of Connecticut children in this legislative session.

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